

INDIANS IN URBAN AREAS

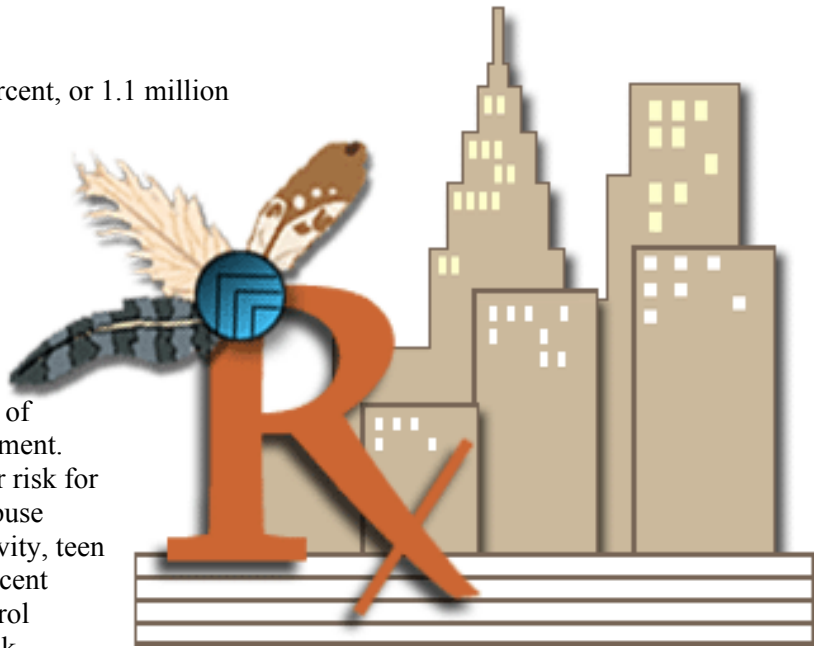
ISSUE

The 1990 Census showed that 56.2 percent, or 1.1 million American Indians and Alaska Natives, reside in urban areas.

BACKGROUND

Urban Indians not only share the same health problems as the general Indian population; their health problems are exacerbated in terms of mental and physical hardships because of the lack of family and traditional cultural environment. Urban Indian youth also have a greater risk for serious mental health and substance abuse problems, suicide, increased gang activity, teen pregnancy, abuse, and neglect. In a recent instance, the Centers for Disease Control became involved in a hepatitis outbreak involving numerous fatalities associated with

IV drug use in an urban Indian population. Recent studies of the urban Indian population document poor health status and reveal that lack of adequate health care services are a serious problem for most families.



SITUATION

Title V of Public Law 94-437, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, authorizes the appropriation of funds for urban Indian health organizations. Title V funds are but one source of funding for urban Indian health organizations. There are 34 urban Indian health organizations operating at 41 sites located in cities throughout the United States. Urban Indian primary care clinics and outreach programs provide culturally acceptable, accessible, affordable, accountable, and available health services to an underserved off-reservation urban Indian population. The 34 programs engage in a variety of activities, ranging from the provision of outreach and referral services to the delivery of comprehensive ambulatory health care. The urban Indian health programs are independently operated through grants and contracts from IHS. Most urban Indian programs obtain supplemental resources from private and other local government sources.

Since 1972, the Congress has gradually increased its support, through the IHS, for health related activities in off-reservation settings to help Indian people gain access to available health services.

OPTIONS/PLANS

The IHS will continue to advocate for urban Indian health program development. The IHS recently funded an Urban Indian Epidemiology Center to focus on improving the knowledge of urban Indian health status.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For referral to the appropriate spokesperson, contact the IHS Public Affairs Staff at 301-443-3593.